



# ISSUE 1 — July 2021



*First-hand*  *Insights*  
A PUBLICATION OF **Children's Trust Fund**

## IN THIS ISSUE

### EXECUTIVE UPDATE:

- **5 things you need to know about Missouri's new Office of Childhood**

### FUNDING & GRANTS:

- **Child Sexual Abuse Prevention is Possible: Thoughts from new CTF Grantee MOCSA**

### PUBLIC EDUCATION:

- **CTF aims to change "social norms" with research-backed campaigns**

### UPDATE FROM EMILY:

- **Nominate a hero for Emily to interview in an upcoming issue**

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

## 5 things you need to know about Missouri's new Office of Childhood

The new Office of Childhood, which is set to go into effect on August 28, 2021, will consolidate Missouri's primary early childhood programs and funding (child care, home visiting, and Pre-K). Here are five powerful insights CTF Director Emily van Schenk Hof has to offer:

### 1. It's a good thing for Missouri kids!

Missouri's early childhood governance has been weak—programs are spread across three state agencies, with limited strategic coordination. You may have experiences with state programs that have not lived up to their intent or potential. This move is designed to **create a strong foundation** for Missouri's early childhood programs.

### 2. It won't be easy.

Creating an efficient, effective and coordinated system will take **time**. There will be setbacks and decisions that may disappoint. Early childhood stakeholders will have to summon a great deal of patience while the new Office comes together – balancing accountability and expectations, extending grace.

### 3. It brings focus to the whole child.

Missouri can't keep prioritizing educational outcomes at the expense of other outcomes. For child abuse prevention advocates, our focus is not third grade reading scores—it's **safe, stable and nurturing environments** from day one. The Office has pledged, publicly and privately, that their perspective will be **the whole child** with equal focuses on health, safety and education.

### 4. It couldn't have a better Director than Dr. Pam Thomas!

Pam is uniquely equipped to lead this new office. She has a long history in early childhood as the program administrator for the First Steps Program. Most importantly, Pam has **the heart of a child advocate**—she is driven by her passion for changing outcomes for kids and is not afraid of challenging the status quo.

### 5. It requires your voice.

Missouri's early childhood programs will only be strong if stakeholders become **more involved** in informing policy in Missouri. Our state, and this new Office, is committed to weaving **stakeholder feedback** and engagement into the culture of the Office. CTF is ready to make sure these aspirations become a reality.



DR. PAM THOMAS, FORMER PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR FOR FIRST STEPS, WAS NAMED DIRECTOR OF THE NEW OFFICE.

## FUNDING & GRANTS

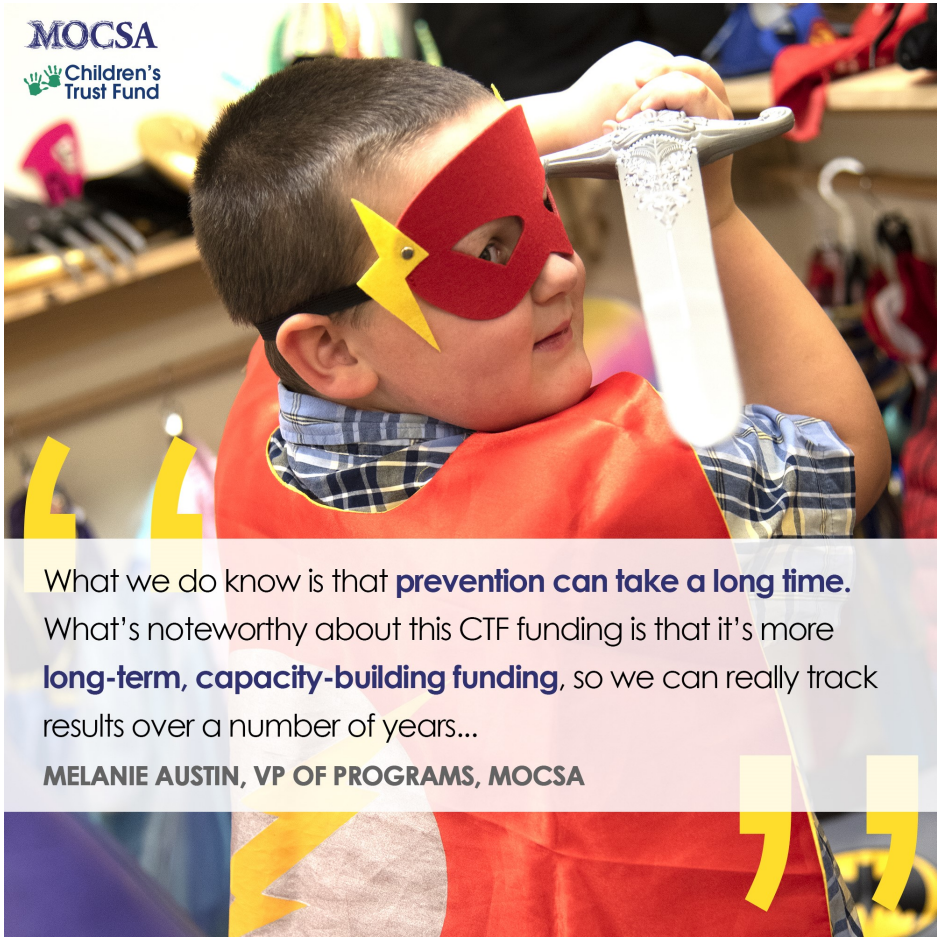
## Child sexual abuse prevention is possible: Thoughts from new CTF Grantee MOCSA

### "A problem in the field..."

In our [most recent round of Grant Funding](#), CTF committed nearly \$1.7 million over the next four years specifically targeted at measurably preventing Child Sexual Abuse.

We took some time to talk with *Melanie Austin*, Assistant VP of Programs at [MOCSA \(Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault\)](#) in Kansas City, one of four organizations awarded a grant, about how MOCSA intends to use CTF funding to integrate child abuse prevention strategies into its already proven community-based service model.

"A problem in the field of sexual violence, and specifically child sexual abuse, is that **there are no significant evidence-based studies** on what actually works when it comes to prevention," Melanie states. "What we do know is that prevention can take a long time. What's noteworthy about this CTF funding is that it's more long-term, capacity-building funding, so we can really track results over a number of years – and the grants help cover the cost of creating the actual tools we need to evaluate outcomes."



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MELANIE AUSTIN, VP OF PROGRAMS, MOCSA





## “Operating from a public health framework...”

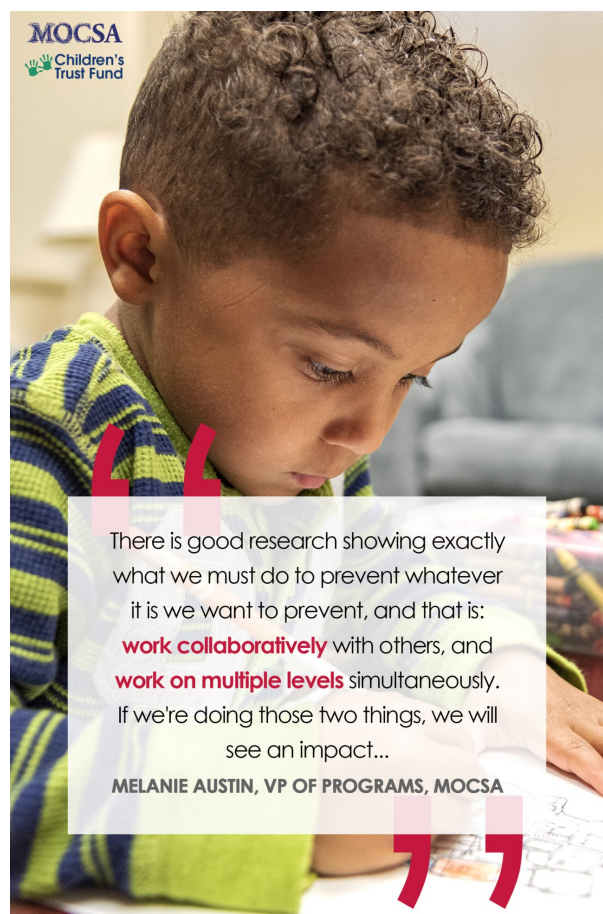
MOCSA, which has **40+ years of history** providing essential, responsive victim services, counseling, public education, and legal aid in the Kansas City metro area, began focusing on preventative work at the community level in 2013, including organizing three coalitions in three different metro communities. These **coalitions are comprised of community partners** in education, law enforcement, and a variety of social service agencies who come together to draft prevention action plans.

Some of the preventative plans facilitated by MOCSA are implemented on their own, and others are completely integrated into existing public health plans. “We’re operating from a public health framework,” Melanie explains, “Each of our coalition plans offers strategies to **prevent sexual violence at the policy level, organizational level, environmental level, and individual level**. Each plan also has different data points that we’re looking to track.”

With the CTF Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Grant initiative, MOCSA can use this **“layered strategies” approach** – where a problem is tackled in multiple ways at the same time, making it easier to accomplish noticeable changes – to help communities coordinate their resources, which Ms. Austin believes is the real key to having a greater long-term impact.

“I like to think about other public health issues and that amazing shifts we’ve seen,” she remarks with enthusiasm, “take smoking – when I was a kid, everyone smoked. Then, over the course of 25 years, there’s been individual and community education, regulation, policy initiatives, local ordinances, shifts in social norms... and the sum of these strategies layered together, over time, has been fewer people smoking.”

## “What do you want to measure?”



So, what would MOCSA like to see change for good in the communities it serves? “Of course, we know our team would like to see fewer actual incidents of child sexual assault, fewer calls to our 24-hour crisis intervention hotline,” Melanie elaborates, “but ultimately **the communities who will benefit from this funding will decide**. We’re asking them now in our coalition meetings: what do you want to measure?”

For MOCSA, the goal is not only creating a stable model that can be replicated in any community, but also one that builds in the time needed for each community to truly identify risk factors to reduce and protective factors to improve. “This is not a controlled research trial, but **we’re in a good position to monitor the success of community programs**,” says Melanie, “CTF, by providing this funding opportunity and having it be multiple-year funding means that we have time to get a project actually up and running – not just scrambling to spend dollars in a way that may not be effective. **We have time to know exactly what we need to focus on** in each community and implement a layered strategy.”

## “Realistically...”

At CTF, our team is asked often: **what must we actually do to prevent child sexual abuse in Missouri?** It’s a remarkably difficult question to answer. Ms. Austin admits that there may be no single magic solution, citing a vacuum of long-term study on child sexual abuse, coupled

with the challenges faced by organizations doing preventative work – namely the public’s discomfort with the topic of sexual assault in general, and the expectations many donors and funders have of producing fast results and universal programs.

**“Realistically, programs that produce results require a 5, 10, 15 year process.** But,” she reiterates, “there is good research showing exactly what we must do to prevent whatever it is we want to prevent, and that is: work collaboratively with others, and work on multiple levels simultaneously. If we’re doing those two things, we will see an impact, even if it takes longer than any of us would like.”

The work MOCSA is doing is promising. The organization’s existing sexual assault prevention framework offers a starting point for what could possibly be some of the most transformative work ever yet done to develop a replicable model that communities can use to tangibly reduce incidents of child sexual abuse.

**CTF is pleased to fund this initiative at MOCSA and report on its significance and outcomes. Together with our grantees and stakeholders, CTF is leading our statewide and nationwide charge to #endthetrend.**

**See a list of all grantees awarded funds for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and learn more about CTF’s funded programs by clicking here:**

<https://ctf4kids.org/child-sexual-abuse-prevention-grants/>





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## PUBLIC EDUCATION:

# CTF aims to change “social norms” with research-backed campaigns

A strategy update from CTF Public Education Committee Chair, Melissa Birdsell:

“After coming onto the CTF Board, I was excited to be able to serve on the Public Education Committee. And as someone who works in the field of child advocacy, I was thrilled to learn about the commitment by CTF toward **prevention education**.

We know, through years of research, that prevention education for children and adults is the key to keeping kids safe. So, going through the process of conducting surveys and **learning what Missourians actually think and know** about child abuse and other related issues has been fascinating.

With the help and guidance of [The Montana Institute](#), CTF surveyed people across the state, concentrating on **four main areas of concern** for Missouri’s children: ***Safe Sleep, Corporal Punishment, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, and Child Maltreatment Prevention.***

Gathering this type of information is vital to making sure CTF and agencies utilizing CTF’s resources are sending **appropriate and effective messages** to people throughout the State about protecting children. By knowing what people actually believe, we can bridge the gap between actual norms and perceived norms. In this way, we can create effective messages about child safety and affect real change.

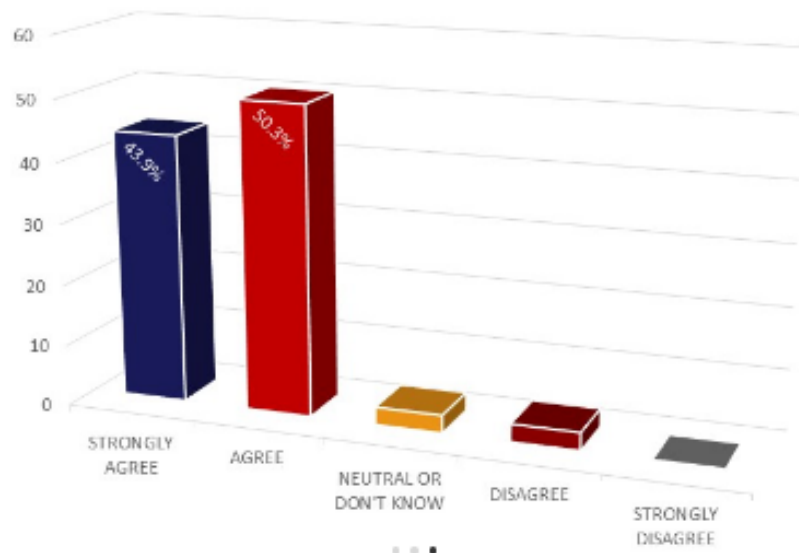
**Administering the survey was only step one.** We must now use the data to create messaging to help people understand the effects of on children and society. CTF can take a leading role from their position in Jefferson City in this messaging.

The CTF staff and board want nothing more than for the children we serve to have safe and happy childhoods. With such a lofty goal, we must have people who are truly dedicated to this purpose. I am grateful to serve alongside of those very types of people.”

MISSOURI

## CTF 2020 SOCIAL NORMS SURVEY DATA

“There are better ways to discipline a child than to use physical punishment.”



## UPDATE FROM EMILY:

# Nominate a hero for Emily to interview in an upcoming issue

If you can, please take 3 minutes to **nominate a hero** for me to interview in an upcoming edition of *First-hand Insights*. A hero doesn’t have to be a recipient of CTF funding or connected to CTF. It can be an **employee or volunteer** at an agency doing great work in your community, a **parent or teacher** going above and beyond for kids, a philanthropic **community member**, or a **legislator or policy advocate**. The most important thing about the hero you nominate is that **the work they are doing for children and families inspires you to keep doing yours**.

Use the form below to let us know about your Hero Nominee. We won’t contact them until we make a selection and get a little more information from you. Also, while we’ll give you an opportunity to reach out to them on our behalf, your nominee doesn’t have to know who nominated them. Get started by sharing just a few details with us, and a member of our staff will be in touch.



## Stay “In-the-Know”

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Nominate a “Hero”



## KEEP IN TOUCH

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## What is First-Hand Insights?

We launched **First-Hand Insights** in 2021 to give our stakeholders **reliable information and real-life inspiration**.

We believe those working hardest on behalf of children deserve to hear directly from trusted sources and thought leaders in their field. Think of it as “**news for CTF insiders**,” a periodic, first-hand look at the tangible steps we take to protect and strengthen Missouri’s kids and families.